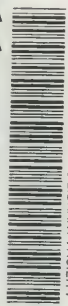


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THE
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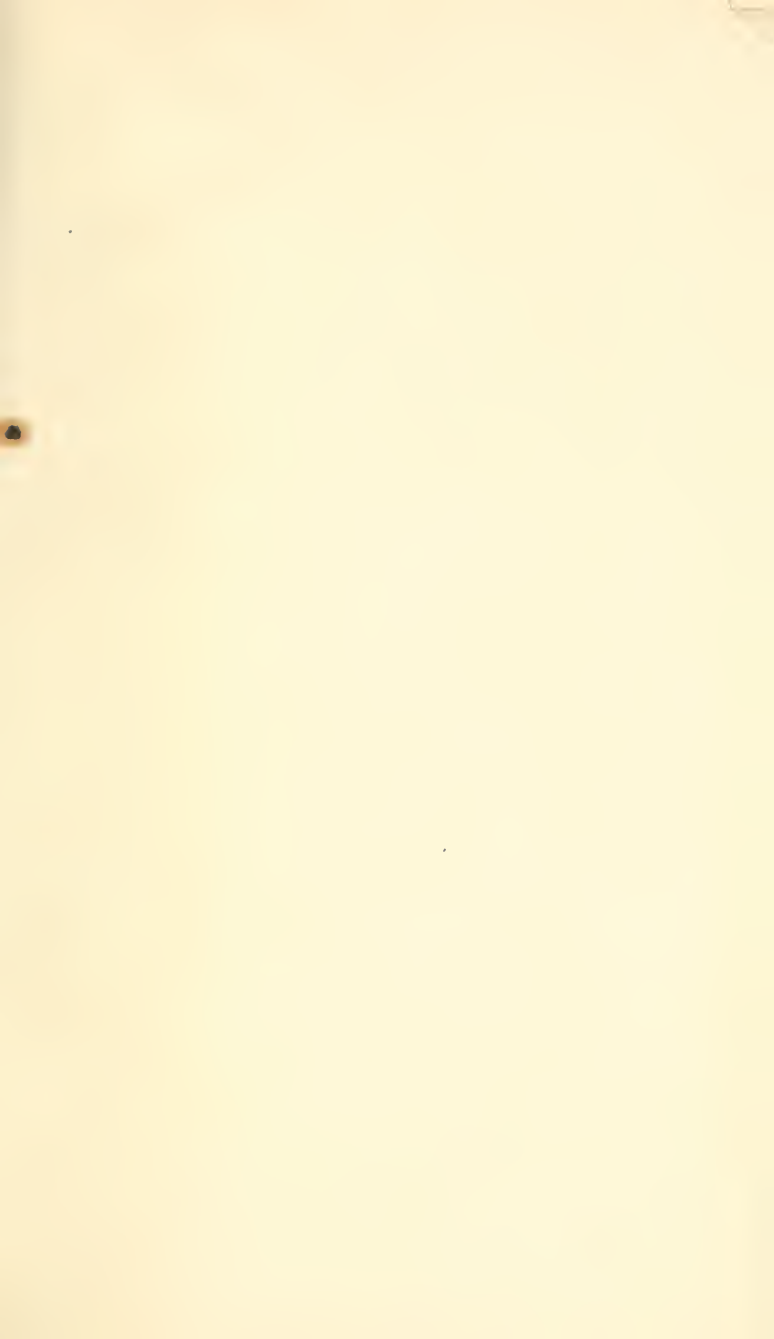
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THE VICTIM.

THE VICTIM.

A T A L E

OF THE

“LAKE OF THE FOUR CANTONS.”

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“A TRAVELLER’S THOUGHTS.”

L O N D O N :

LONGMAN, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, & LONGMANS.

1838.

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T .

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T .

THE moral that the following TALE contains, will, it is hoped, compensate in some degree for its fictitious character.

No precise date is affixed to the poem, beyond being posterior to the great struggle for liberty, in which TELL gained his immortality, and SWITZERLAND her independence.

The unreserved confidence which "CONSTANCE" places in her lover, is in perfect accordance with the great purity and simplicity of manners which peculiarly characterize the SWISS, and on that ground she may fairly be acquitted of any breach of decorum.

THE VICTIM.

INTRODUCTION.

I.

AWAKE ! thou ceaseless dreamer of the past !
Thou slumberer of the present hour, awake !
Or—grant me, Poesy ! the dreams thou hast,
When Fancy's lulling whispers o'er thee break,
Oh ! weave them in my dream, for pity's sake !
But let not Memory scare my tranced sleep,
Ah ! then my heart shall cease to throb and ache,
In that sweet slumber, so profound and deep,
While Poesy shall dream, and Fancy vigils keep !

II

My vision be of purity and love—
If ever such have blessed this world of woe,
If love on earth as pure as that above,
Can burn as bright in woman's heart below ;
If streams which here in virtue's current flow,
As heavenly waters can as stainless be—
Say—where the land their image can bestow ?
Say—where the home of Love and Purity ?
If such may be on earth—HELVETIA—'tis with thee !

PART I.

I

DEEP in FLUELEN's shady bower,
20 There bloomed a lone and lovely flower,
Sole daughter of an aged sire,
Whose soul was touched with freedom's fire :
To him was nought to glad his hearth,
Save CONSTANCE, and a life of worth.
Here Virtue formed in Beauty's mould,
A second EVE, as once of old,
Sent like an angel from above,
To light an Eden with her love.

Such CONSTANCE was—her woman's breast,
Was Love's own dear familiar nest,
So soft he found it, and so warm,
It had for him a double charm :
To seek him out a sweeter home,
The truant urchin ne'er would roam.
Loved CONSTANCE not as some have done,
Bestowing feebly half the heart,
She gave the whole—or else gave none,
Too noble to retain a part.
When once 'twas given—'twas ne'er recalled,
40 When once she loved, she loved for ever ;
Yes—CONSTANCE' faith defied a world,
A faith, no change of love could sever !

II.

In GRUTLI's wave-worn deathless town,
A Hunter dwelt—high his renown
Amid his native ice-bound steeps,
Where Avalanche in thunder leaps.
A braver warrior in her host,
All rocky URI could not boast,

Her Alpine sons of liberty,
A man more fearless, and more free,
Than dauntless MEINRAD of GRUTLI !
The eagle trembled at his tread ;
The chamois knew him well, and fled ;
To die and tempt it were the same,
So withering fell his deadly aim.
There sat enthroned upon his brow,
The noble spirit of the free ;
Save God—to none his knee would bow,
His soul was reared in purity ;
60 The fire of TELL within him burned, ,
The badge he wore MORGARTEN earned,
'Twas, "ONE FOR ALL, AND ALL FOR ONE,"
This stamped him bold HELVETIA'S son.

III.

Some Poets say, I know not why,
Yet, Oh—how sweet to think it true !
That as each spirit quits the sky,
A kindred spirit leaves it too,
That twain on earth one bliss may find,
The union of their wedded mind.

So MEINRAD deemed, and so it proved,
For CONSTANCE was the maid he loved.
She seemed to him that brighter part,
Which yet was wanting to his heart,
That tender, blissful, loving thing,
Which woman's self alone can bring,

 To fill, and warm, and light the breast ;
Which woman's love alone can give,
To bid its hopeful morrow live,
 To set its aching void at rest !

80 Nor did he woo with dextrous art,
To gain an entrance to her heart ;
He knew the thought that dwelt in his,
 That thought he knew would then be her's ;
Their souls were one—at least in this,
 The ken that purity confers.
Nor mingled he amid the crowd,
 Of those who flatter with the tongue ;
The love he owned was scarce avowed,
 A chain unseen around him hung ;
Though none might see, yet CONSTANCE saw,
 She felt the link that reached to her,
For love will spy the chords that draw,
 The captive heart that cannot stir.

IV.

The power of love o'er MEINRAD stole,

The secret bias of his soul ;

He sought it not, and yet it came,

To burn within a quenchless flame.

Too artless was FLUELEN's maid,

When MEINRAD once had owned the smart,

100 To think affection can be paid,

Too cheaply by a woman's heart.

Oh—no ! she framed no lying tale,

Of feelings shocked—or feigned surprise—

The blush that mantled 'neath her veil,

The love that darted from her eyes,

Too plainly told the pleading swain,

His lover's suit was not in vain.

V.

Such was the man that CONSTANCE loved ;

The perils of his hunter's strife,

A source of new affection proved,

They hung a charm around his life—

To welcome home that fearless youth,

Was more than happiness in sooth !

Oh ! when they met, 'twas doubly dear,
Beatitude enhanced by fear !
Then MEINRAD told of gulphs that yawn,
Insatiate round each icy Horn ;
Of gulphs his dauntless footsteps crossed,
Where many a hardy Swiss was lost ;
120 Of crags that towered above the rest,
Where Lammergheyer his aerie placed,
How there he bearded in his nest,
That sovereign of the frozen waste.
Of nights passed on some lonely rock,
That hourly trembled with the shock,
Of Avalanche that rushing by,
Like midnight thunder rent the sky !
Fair CONSTANCE shuddered as he spake,
Yet loved to hear for MEINRAD's sake.
Then, as to chase away her fear,
He told how softly charmed his ear,
When wakeful on the frozen fell,
The tinkling of her village bell !
That sound he knew was speaking then,
From out his CONSTANCE' lovely glen,

It reached his icy couch above,
To tell him of his sleeping love.

VI.

Anon—would say how shone the moon,
On hoary scalp, or calm lagoon,
140 Then silvered every glittering Horn,
 The guardians of the tranquil deep,
In paly splendour to adorn,
 Their peaceful, midnight hour of sleep!
Anon—how cold the lunar-bow,
 Was arched beneath his loftier way,
It seemed so flickering, faint, and low,
 The Ghost of beams that shone by day!

VII.

But Oh! the light—the blaze of morn!
By man too dazzling to be borne—
That soaring, lofty-pinioned one,
The eagle, only meets the sun!
The diamond sheen of glacier's host,
 With every pinnacle a gem!
An icy world in glory lost,
 Which Alp on Alp throws back again!

None but the Hunter sees the world,
In such a flood of light unfurled !
Then burst a thousand waterfalls,
Which darkness' icy spell enthrals,
160 From noon till sunset joyous melt,
Gushing adown the mountain's belt.

VIII.

How too at eve, he watched the sun,
First gild FLUELEN'S slender spire,
Then ere his glorious course was run,
Light CONSTANCE' chalêt's roof with fire ;
Yes ! how he watched the trembling light,
Wax fainter, till it vanished quite,
And spire, and cot were lost to sight !
How, as the mist curled up the glen,
From out the slowly purpling lake,
It veiled the calm abodes of men ;
Till gleams of light would fitful break,
Ev'n through the twilight and the gloom,
To point each freeman's happy home.
Then turned he to the GOTHARD'S brow,
To catch his last deep-ruby glow ;

Then watched each star, that gathered light,
And twinkled at approaching night,
Till Cynthia clomb the icy wall,
180 To shine upon his raptured eye,
As darker grew the nightly pall,
The deep—deep azure of the sky !
Oh ! then his spirit glowed with love,
He knelt, and breathed a prayer above,
A prayer for her, who dwelt below,
While he was watching on the snow.
Then slowly to his crag he crept,
To dream of CONSTANCE as he slept.
Such tales would glad the maiden's ear,
While MEINRAD spake she loved to hear.

IX.

Oft as the Hunter's steps would roam,
He stayed to pluck the Alpine rose,
To bring a lovely garland home,
Entwined with that sweet flower that blows,
In deepest purple by the snows.

Full many a gem, and crystal too,
The wandering MEINRAD found the while,
But when they met his CONSTANCE' view,
Oh ! what repayment in her smile !

200 But more than all he loved to sail,
With her he loved before the gale ;
Upon the bosom of the deep,
To glide beneath each beetling steep,
Recounting deeds her sires had done,
And how, and where the strife befel,
Pointing the path of Freedom's son,
Tracing the deathless steps of TELL !

X.

To GRUTLI'S shore how oft she gazed,
Where SEELISBERG'S grey brow upraised,
Looks back on her sweet peaceful vale,
To catch her lover's promised sail.
Oh ! when it came—what joy to find,
That promised sail before the wind !
How slow the gale that brought that bark,
Love-laden on its silent way,
But when 'twas nigh enough to mark,
The form she loved—'twas fond delay !

'Twas MEINRAD's form—yes ! none but he,
The dauntless MEINRAD of GRUTLI !

220 The light which o'er his features stole,
Broke from the heart triumphantly,
And stamped the image of his soul !

His raven-locks, his eagle-eye,
His lofty brow, where honor shone,
His bronzed cheek by watchings wan,—
His every aspect spoke the man !

XI.

One eve 'twas thus upon the pier,
That CONSTANCE watched his vessel near—
Whilst he, fond youth, saw well that face,

That beamed with innocence and love,
So sweet—so fair—he seemed to trace,

A smile descending from above,
To light him on his love-bound way,
With something more than mortal ray !

Yes ! that soft lip—that azure eye—
Were melting into ecstasy !

They told of rapture felt by none,
Save her who hailed his fond return ;

Of thoughts they spake that burned within,
240 Yes ! thoughts unuttered save by them !
Oh ! such a smile from her to win,
 Was worth a prince's diadem.
Lo ! there she stood, her tresses fair,
Were floating in the balmy air,
A moment's blush was mantling spread,
 Upon her cheek as he drew nigh,
By fits it deepened, and it fled,
 That lovely cheek—how womanly !

XII.

His swan-winged bark had touched the shore,
A moment slept the plashing oar,
A moment fled—his destined bride,
Was seated at her MEINRAD'S side.
The white sails swelled before the breeze,
That whispered through the mulberry trees,
That whispered round FLUELEN'S bower,
And seemed to sigh in that soft hour,
An hour so full of rapturous joy,
Another such might fear to cloy !

XIII.

While gently stealing down the lake,

260 The words were these young MEINRAD spake—

“ CONSTANCE ! I roam once more the snows,

But then return—to leave thee never—

How bright the thought within me glows,

Death—death alone our love can sever !

The day I seek thy happy strand,

Us twain shall link in Hymen’s band ;

To night we part—but ’tis the last

Sad parting thou and I shall know,

Yes ! CONSTANCE, when those hours are passed,

We shall not part again below !

Thou shalt be then my lovely bride,

With thine own father’s blessing given,

I’ll never—never quit thy side !”

(He little thought ’twould be in heaven.)

CONSTANCE.

“ Say MEINRAD have we tasted here,

What hearts united feel and know ?

Yes—something whispered in my ear,

When first we met, it would be so !”

MEINRAD.

“ Away—then every woman’s fear !

280 Thou canst not be but happy here—

From every ill to keep thee free,

My daily—hourly task shall be—

A chalêt’s hearth shall glad thine eye,

When winter’s blast howls dismally ;

Full many a kid shall know thy voice,

Capering round thy fold rejoice ;

Yes ! thou shalt sit beneath the shade,

Of walnut, vine, and mulberry,

Where choristers have perched and played,

Where oft has hummed the tuneful bee—

How joyous will the moments flow !

My life—my light—mine idol, thou !”

CONSTANCE.

“ If this shall be—as sets the sun,

When hours of toil are told and done,

Our little bourn we’ll roam about,

To seek some unseen beauty out,

Some charm new born shall then arise,

To glad our earthly paradise.”

MEINRAD.

“ CONSTANCE ! we’ll hie, as village bell
300 Peals deeply from the lowly dell,
Oft as the sabbath shall return,
 Together to the house of prayer ;
To feel devotion’s spirit burn,
 To pour our joint petition there—
Aye—CONSTANCE ! doubly sweet with thee,
To offer prayer on bended knee :
An angel thou—as ’twere from heaven,
Pointed the path to be forgiven,
My thoughtless soul first taught to prize,
A blissful mansion in the skies.
’Twas thou that fanned devotion’s flame,
 Enkindling at thy matchless worth,
I fondly wished to be the same,
 To be, like thee, no child of earth !”

CONSTANCE.

“ Hush ! now—we’re moulded in one frame,
Now both adore our Maker’s name—
Yes, MEINRAD, we are one in soul,
The skies—the skies our destined goal !

A brighter—better—purer world,
320 Is virtue's blissful destiny—
Where Love's white banner waves unfurled—
 There waves to all eternity !”

Awhile she ceased—her azure eye,
Met MEINRAD'S gazing pensively—
Ev'n as their native purple lake,
Whose waves around FLUELEN break,
Their boundless love seemed little less—
So pure—so deep—so fathomless !

“ Say, MEINRAD ! can this ever be—
 Such bliss on earth were sure denied ?
I'd rather live—and die with thee,
 Yes ! be a freeborn Hunter's bride,
 Than aught the world can give beside !
Though lowly be our simple lot,
There reigns within a peasant's cot,
A peace that pure contentment brings,
Too pure to glad the throne of kings !”

MEINRAD.

“It is that peace—that pure delight,
Which rises on my raptured sight,
340 Of joy it tells in store for me,
Could but that joy be shared with thee !
Ah yes ! t’were sweet to live below,
With one whose every wish I know,
Whose every thought, I feel is mine,
My soul is wedded now with thine !”

CONSTANCE.

“But ev’n this blissful dream of joy,
My woman’s fear will still alloy ;
It is a dream—thou dost not know,
What strange mishap may wake in woe !”

MEINRAD.

“Away ! sweet CONSTANCE, with that thought,
It clouds the joy so dearly bought—
It dims the hour, that ought to glow
The brightest in our walk below.
Away ! with every thought of ill—
Another’s breast such fears might fill—

They cannot—cannot rest with thee—
Thy heart should beat too happily !
Come—glad me with thy wonted lay,
This foolish fear 'twill chase away.”

XIV.

360 A smile around her soft lip played,
As CONSTANCE joyous thus obeyed.

SONG.

I.

Baron HENRY was wedded in TOGGENBERG's Hall,
To the beauteous IDA, the flower of ST. GALL,
When the signet of Hymen he placed on his bride,
Never Love looked more lordly, more gallant than he ;
As all blushing she stood at the young Baron's side,
Never Innocence looked more bewitching than she !

2.

Weary hours that erst lingered in TOGGENBERG's Tower,
Gaily danced in the Eden of IDA's soft bower ;
Day and Night chased each other so quickly away,
 With the fulness of pleasure, the warbling of song,
Was there ever a rapture, ye lovers ! Oh say !
 But it staid there to glad ye in passing along ?

3.

Baron HENRY to IDA had given a dove,
All the down on its bosom was pure as her love,
When her HENRY was absent, she fondled his bird ;
 Perching on her white shoulder, 'twould quit its warm nest,
All the soft things she whispered that little one heard,
 Oh ! how sweetly it nestled, and cooed in her breast !

4.

380 It so happened one day, IDA gave him her ring,
Which he bore round her chamber, till wearied his wing,
(For oft would he bear it—and as often return)
 At that same luckless moment, the sun lit the hill,
IDA opened her lattice to greet the blithe morn,
 When away flew the dove with the ring in his bill !

5.

Soon his soft wings returned, but they brought not with them,
Any gladness to IDA, she mourned for her gem ;
'Twas the gem of all others, the gift of her lord,
Yes ! his last dearest token, the seal of his love,
'Twas the sweet pledge of Hymen, that plighted his word ;
Think at eve how she chided that sly wanton dove.

6.

Ah ! the fate of a woman may hang on a ring !
Lo ! an innocent page found that wee-glittering thing—
Baron HENRY was hunting, as homeward he hied,
From his castle to greet him came that very page,
On his lily-white hand, Baron HENRY espied
IDA's pledge that he gave her, and trembled with rage.

7.

All the menials stood breathless, and gazed at their lord ;
Leaping down from his courser, ne'er uttering a word,
400 Madly deaf to entreaty, he bound that fair youth
To the fiercest of chargers that pranced in his train,—
Lo ! away flew the wild steed, the page at his hoof !
Mountain—heather and valley, were gored with the slain !

8.

Oh ! 'twere well had his anger been sated with ill,
Fiercest jealousy burned in his hot bosom still,
Never chieftain so blinded—so frantic as he—

For he flew like an arrow to IDA's soft bower,
Like the hurricane's blast, or a whirlwind of fire,
He uplifted, then hurled his fair bride from her tower !

9.

Though the lover who wronged thee e'er thought thou wert dead—
Guardian angels stood by thee—thou innocent maid !

IDA falling clung fast to the ivy that grew,

Round the high gloomy towers of 'TOGGENBERG's pile,
There she hung o'er the gulph, with her grave full in view,
Like the sea-gull that builds on a lone rocky isle !

10.

Like a dreamer from sleep, Baron HENRY awoke,
Oh ! how deathlike the sadness that over him broke,
When he gazed on the Eden his IDA had made !

Where now that Elysium ? Oh !—for ever 'twas gone !
420 Not a sound breathed the harp, that his IDA had played,
Ev'n the turtle-dove trembled, and ceased from his song !

11.

“ Gentle IDA ! my IDA ! what then have I done ? ”

“ Ah ! how fearful the moment that finds me alone !

“ Is the light of thy loveliness vanished, and sped ?

“ Gentle IDA ! my IDA ! Oh murder ! Oh death !

“ Yes ! her innocence speaks, now her pure spirit’s fled !

“ ’Twas the one word she spoke ere she drew her last breath !

12.

“ See ! a phantom is walking the dim-lighted hall !

“ Oh God ! ’tis her spirit—Hark ! it speaks from the wall ! ”

“ HENRY ! ne’er shalt thou see me, I leave thee for ever !

“ Seek me not in the wide world, I go far away,

“ Yet know I forgive thee—ev’n thy wrong cannot sever—

“ Sever hearts that were one in the morn of their day ! ”

13.

IDA spoke—and then vanished like mist on the hill,

But the voice that she uttered is floating there still—

’Twas the voice of an angel with balm on its wings—

For it breathed there so softly, and fell on his ear,

Like a blessing from heaven, when the lost bosom clings,

To the dawns of hope, as they shine through the tear !

14.

440 She was seen ne'er again by the Lord of ST. GALL,
Though she dwelt in an abbey beneath his high hall.
HENRY spent all his lifetime in penance and fast,
For the deed he had done, and the Eden he lost ;
Ever cursing the moment when Jealousy cast,
O'er the love of his IDA its withering blast.

XV.

She ceased to sing—but still there played,
The echo of the sound she made :
It melted on the tranquil lake,
Like fleecy cloud, or snowy flake ;
Around the shore the last note creeps,
Then dies away among the steeps ;
For as they floated on the tide,
The softest whisper still replied ;
Along the coast, each rocky cove,
Or asked, or answered of their love.
All fear had fled, and all alloy,
To mar the fulness of their joy—
An hour it was of heavenly bliss—
A brighter world that shone in this !

XVI.

460 The sun had sunk the hills below ;
The fire had died on GOTHARD'S brow ;
Star after star lit up the sky,
And twinkling spoke of worlds on high ;
Had told full many a vesper bell,
That day had bid the world farewell ;
Huge, bleak, and dim, the giants grew,
That brooded o'er the tranquil deep ;
Darker waxed the shadowy hue,
That mantled all the scene in sleep.
Now every village spire was lost,
That marked the margin of the coast ;
The shore around, and on the heights,
There shone a thousand flickering lights ;
A thousand such were on the sea,
But pictured there more tremblingly !

XVII.

'Tis night—the bark has found its way,
Again to deep FLUELEN'S bay ;
An aged man awaits its sail,
The children of his love to hail—

480 Lo ! now their voices greet his ear—
Full soon the dim white sails appear—
'They come—they come—a moment more—
They leap upon the rocky shore :
The old man clasped his lovely child,
And gazed on MEINRAD too, and smiled.
He blessed the twain with trembling hands,
But part they must—the hour commands—
Yet not to part, as once they did,
When all the future's face seemed hid ;
They parted with a cloudless sky !
If ever Life had power to bless,
It smiled on their futurity,
With youth—health—hope and happiness !

END OF PART FIRST.

PART II.

I.

A man there was, unknown his name,
Who once had sued for CONSTANCE' hand,
But unrequited was his flame,
He wandered in a foreign land.
Unkenned his country was to all,
Or whence he came—or where he went ;
500 Some said he was a son of GAUL,
That hitherward a spy was sent—
But this was disavowed by none,
HELVETIA, owned him not her son !

But who he was—time yet may bring
To light the strange, and hidden thing.
If CONSTANCE knew—she ne'er revealed—
When asked of him, her lips were sealed.

II.

The wide world he had roamed about,
In learning's highest walk had trod,
Till grown too wise, had learn'd to doubt,
The very being of a God !
From that same hour, his tainted heart,
From peace and virtue seem'd to part;
No law he owned—he owned no creed,
His only lawgiver, his deed.
The passions of his reckless breast,
The only guides his soul confessed ;
Through every change of good and ill,
He sought to sate his lordly will ;
520 Forgiveness fled his selfish heart ;
Revenge for mercy took the part ;
Nor hallowed was his lip by prayer,
Instead, a curse seemed breathing there ;

Sabbath was stranger to his soul ;
The years unheeded o'er him roll,
Unheeded, save as each would bring,
Its cup of joy, or scorpion's sting.

III.

For pleasure's sake, he cared to live,
For aught beside he willed to die ;
For all the joyance life can give,
He sought, but sought it wrongfully.
Each word—each look he had at will,
They worked the purpose of his heart,
No wonder then, they worked for ill,
Since Truth resigned her sway to Art.
Yet such the man, who sought to win,
A maid—so pure—so meek—so lowly—
As pure as mortal was from sin—
If angels dwelt on earth—as holy !
540 The force he tried of every wile,
Her youthful bosom to beguile ;
Yet art on art was tried in vain—
Her love despairing e'er to gain,

He parted, once again to roam,
All recklessly without a home.

IV.

No longer was the world to him,
A sunny world—its light grew dim ;
A blasted—hapless man he strayed ;
 There dwelt within his frantic breast,
A canker worse than sin had made,
 A sea of torment ne'er at rest !
“ What ! foiled by that poor lowly maid ! ”
“ His joyance fled—his hopes betrayed ” !
Revenge and death broke o'er his dream,
“ Revenge ! Revenge ! ” his only theme !

V.

In fit disguise he gained that spot,
Where love had cursed his wayward lot.
That heart he saw resigned to one,
A holier—purer flame had won—

560 He heard the lover's parting vow,
The last sweet eve, he saw them sever,
'Twas then he muttered, deep and low,
"They shall not meet again! no never!"

VI.

One radiant moon had waned away,
Since MEINRAD left FLUELEN'S bay;
At length had come the wonted time,
That CONSTANCE vowed at "MARY'S" shrine;
Right godly Anchorites await,
At EINSIEDELN the holy fête;
And pilgrims gather far and wide,
To cross to BRUNNEN on the tide.

VII.

A matin hymn adown the vale,
Rose wildly on the morning gale,
And clearer still, and louder grew,
Till troop on troop were seen afar,
Breaking awhile upon the view,
Then lost where winding gorges are—

As nearer yet the concourse drew,
Their tread rung like the tramp of war ;
580 Blithely they swept the early dew,
Their march began with morning's star,
Nor ceased, till eve had closed the day,
And vesper hymn had died away.
They thronged FLUELEN'S woody glen,
Each with an offering, maids and men ;
Both old and young, and poor and great,
Were journeying to the wondrous fête.
Nor tarried they, round LUCERNE'S shore,
Was quickly roused each slumbering oar.

VIII.

Oh ! 'twas a joyous sight to see,
The crowded barks that glided by,
So gay with pilgrim company !
Their coiffeurs, beads, embroidery,
Their costumes all of rainbow dye !
They sail—they sail—how wild and high,
Breaks their full chorus to the sky—
A thousand tongues in symphony !

With one accordant mighty voice,
The bastion rocks around rejoice.
600 On—on they sail, each beetling cliff,
Greets joyfully the passing skiff,
Till song grows faint, and bright hues fade.
Yet still a lingering echo played,
And oft a moment's gleam would break,
Far—far away upon the lake ;
While tracing thus their distant oar,
That lit those sparks along the shore,
Receding still, how sweet to hear,
Their hymn expire upon the ear !

IX.

The sky grew dark, and darker still,
The swarthy bosom of the lake ;
Deep silence sat on every hill ;
The linden durst nor wave, nor shake.
Murkier—deadlier waxed the gloom ;
FLUELEN's valley seemed a tomb ;
Fair LUCERNE's lake, a sepulchre,
Wherein were swept all things that were.

A horrid pause—a time of dread—

For every living thing had fled !

620 Now streamed athwart the tempest's night,

A hideous flash of sulphur-light ;

Anon—the crash of thunder broke,

So wild—so deafening was the stroke,

Aghast each giant mountain shook !

Hark ! round the margin of the lake,

So loud—so dread the echoes wake,

The rampart-rocks seem rent asunder,

By every fitful burst of thunder !

While roaring leaps from height to height,

 Filling with wild amaze each glen,

The mingled sounds of drear affright,

 Which Alp on Alp flings back again !

X.

But few and big the drops that fell,

Upon the water's sullen swell ;

And long and loud the tempest's roar,

Deep volleyed round the trembling shore.

Now gathering here—now gathering there—
It cast a moment's fearful glare,
Till rolling down the darkened sea,
640 It left FLUELEN still, and free.

XI.

The threatening storm, and tempest's ire,
Were seen by CONSTANCE' aged sire ;
Fearful he bade her bark delay,
Till cloud and thunder passed away.
All now were gone, and none but she,
Remained of pilgrim-company.
Joyful that all seemed hushed again,
She peeped from out her rocky glen :
One bark she saw, within her reach,
Moored on FLUELEN'S rocky beach.
One only bark—a man stood there,
He seemed the shallop's mariner.
Then CONSTANCE' sire, albeit late,
Would have her join the morrow's fête.
The future's face he little knew,
But blessed, and bade his child adieu.

XII.

The sun shines bright, but in the air,
There dwells a chill the tempest leaves.
For BRUNNEN'S town, the breeze blows fair ;
660 The loosened bark now gently heaves ;
The sail is set—o'er swell on swell—
The boat bounds like a wild gazelle—
She bounds with joy o'er that blue tide,
Which erst so deadly dark was dyed.
There proudly towered on either hand,
The ACHSENBERG, and SEELISBERG,
Two giant crags, that beetling stand,
Triumphant o'er the prostrate surge.
They passed the sacred shrine of TELL,
Fair CONSTANCE knew, and marked it well—
But Oh ! how fondly dwelt her eye,
When GRUTLI'S spire she could descry.
Oh ! then how bright that soft eye glowed,
For then she dreamed, (so oft love errs)
She saw her MEINRAD'S blest abode—
'Twas MEINRAD'S home—it would be her's !

Ah ! where is he ? His footsteps tread,
O'er many a frozen torrent's bed.
Far o'er the Alps his swift feet roam,
680 Away from that sweet peaceful home !
She gazed—and gazed till all was lost—
The speck had vanished from the coast !

XIII.

Lo ! as she stretched her soft white arm,
Her dazzled eye to shield from harm,
A faithless bracelet loosened fell,
 Plashing it sank into the lake,—
She started—for she loved it well,
 Its loss she mourned, for MEINRAD'S sake.
Scarce had she time till then to mark,
The man that steered her little bark ;
Fixed was his gaze, like venom'd snake,
Erect his fatal spring to take—
On her he gazed so piercingly,
She quailed beneath his deadly eye !
Timid she looked—just then there shot,
A glance once seen, and ne'er forgot !

Back o'er the past her memory ran,
Had she not seen—not known that man?
Of all men most she feared to see—
700 Oh heavens! and could it then be he!
It is!—It is!—she knows him now!
The chill of death comes o'er her brow—
“’Tis he!” she shrieks, in wild alarm,
“Oh God! protect me from his arm!”

XIV.

“CONSTANCE! thou knowest my suit,” he said,
“That suit, forsooth, was once denied,”
“This lake—this lake—thy bridal bed,”
“Or, CONSTANCE! swear to be my bride!”
“Never! Oh never! Let me die!”
She shrieked, in fearful agony—
“Rash maid! thou temptest me—dost thou?
“Seest thou the yawning gulph below?
“Aye—seest thou not that chilly wave?
“That word revoke—or ’tis thy grave!”

XV.

Down knelt the maid, but steady eye,
To heaven she raised imploringly—
“Great God! my MEINRAD is not nigh—
“Thy will be done—I die! I die!”

XVI.

Incarnate fiend!—could man stand by,
720 That maid in all her purity,
In youth, in bloom, in loveliness,
Nor feel one pang at her distress?
Say, durst thou lift thine impious hand,
Though hell should blight thee with its curse;
Yes! blast thee with a withering brand,
Like murderous CAIN, for thou art worse?
Or, heaven's it was—a righteous will,
That thou shouldst fill thy meed of ill!

XVII.

Ev'n as she weeping knelt in prayer,
Ruthless he seized her silken hair,
Nor stayed that prayerful lip to mark,
But hurled her from the quivering bark!

One heavy plunge—one woman's shriek—
Her life's last ebbing struggles speak—
Her look still fixed on that fierce brow;
As o'er her lips the chill waves flow,
A gurgling voice, that ceased to live,
Still faintly muttered,—“ I forgive !”
Yet as she slowly sank, her eye
740 Still gazed on his reproachfully !

XVIII.

Where now that maid—the pure—the fair ?
A moment saw her seated there,
A moment more, her form is fled ;
So softly sealed above her head,
The waters leave no trace behind,
Save one that haunts the guilty mind !
Just heaven ! 'twas thy all-wise decree,
No bliss on earth should perfect be ;
Their cup of wrath, the wicked fill,
For hell,—but worth and purity,
On earth meet oft what seemeth ill ;
In heaven their recompence shall be !

XIX.

Ah ! where the lover of the dead ?
That widowed one—and yet unwed !
The self-same hour that CONSTANCE died,
The chain was snapped, that bound his side.
Say—was it some unwonted start,
That thrilled a dagger to his heart ?
A sudden fear ?—than fear—’twas more—
760 An anguished pang unfelt before ;—
A dread, that flashed across his brain,
Like deathbolt on the battle-plain ;
A chilling, withering, fearful blast,
That told him all his hopes were passed ;
A voice that whispered in his ear,
So sad—so ghostly—and so clear—
“ Thy CONSTANCE calls thee to her bier !”
Smote like one by prophet’s curse,
He staggered o’er the brink he crossed,
Then headlong fell, in darkness lost,
Ingulphed his shapeless—mangled corse !

XX.

Say, MEINRAD ! wast thou called away,
To share a brighter world of love ?
Thy kindred spirit winged its way,
To seek with CONSTANCE realms above,
To taste of bliss without alloy,
Still kindred in eternal joy !

XXI.

While sunk in sleep, that self same night,
Another spirit took its flight.
780 For CONSTANCE' sire, an aged man,
His finished course in calmness ran.
He breathed no sigh—no sign he made ;
The morrow found him softly laid,
As one who took his peaceful sleep,
In slumber more profound and deep ;
So gently passed away his breath,
On him so light the hand of death.
Oh ! had he known his daughter's fate,
Had sank his hoary head in tears,
But on his furrowed brow there sat,
Contentment, with its ripened years !

Old age to him brought no alloy,
But sunset seemed of all his joy !
In death, by faith in ONE 'twas given,
The sire should meet his child in heaven.

XXII.

Fair CONSTANCE slept beneath the wave,
Though none there were that knew her grave,
Full many a widow's tear was shed,
Full many an orphan mourned the dead,
300 For oft had glowed the widow's eye,
And orphan's, with her charity.

XXIII.

Had waxed the moon, and waned again,
Since sorrow filled FLUELEN's glen ;
The nightly wind with dreary wail,
Blew shrill down ALTORF's darkened vale ;
When loudly shook the convent's gate,
With those who knocked without so late ;
A sick man in their arms they bore,
Then laid him at the holy door.

Full many a friar thronged to see,
The man they left so hastily.
First queried of his home, and name,
Then how the sickness o'er him came;
Away he turned from every one,
Nor sign nor answer made to none.
Nor Christian symbol would he own,
Although by priest before him shown;
His hand he waved to those who held,
Before him JESUS' sign of old.

820 The friars crossed themselves, for well
They might to see an infidel.

XXIV.

Yet paler grew, and yet more wan,
The visage of that dying man,
As still he lay awhile as death,
So feebly seemed to draw his breath;
He hid, anon, his ghastly head,
Then rolled convulsed upon his bed;
Anon—he started from his couch,
As though he feared a phantom's touch;

Not one amid that company,
Could brook the fierceness of his eye ;
It rolled—it glared—it struck the sight,
With more than mortal—lurid light,
To blast as 'twere with fire from hell,
The brow whereon its lightnings fell !
Anon, he cursed—then clenched his teeth,
Like one that dies a murderer's death.
Anon, some wild unearthly sound,
Would break the antique chamber round,
840 So loud the shrieks, that none could doubt,
Ev'n those might hear, that stood without !
Accents they were, that all might fear,
Though few interpret what they hear.
Yet were there some, that knew them well,
He spake, said they, of death, of hell,
Of torments never to expire,
Of deathless worm, of quenchless fire !

XXV.

But once his rolling eye was fixed,
Intent the holy men betwixt,

He uttered then—with stifled cry,
“She gazes still, I see her eye!—
“Beneath the wave, it looks at me!—
“At me—as erst, reproachfully.”
Back starting then, he hid his head,
As paralyzed with inward dread;
Then rose again, as one in death,
Gasps to draw his struggling breath.
The sweat stood chill upon his brow;
His eye grew glazed, and ceased to glow;
860 On Satan’s name he called, and cursed,
Then sank, for death had done its worst!

XXVI.

The holy brethren stood aghast,
They feared to think that breath his last—
They ne’er had seen so dread a sight,
As lay before their eye that night;
The visage of the dead was writhed,
More fiendlike seemed than when he lived!
They gazed, but scarcely drew a breath,
So fearful was that corse in death!

A death so dread amid the gloom,
Must haunt each witness to the tomb;
Full many a prayer was breathed that night;
His beads right oft each friar told;
All looked, and longed for morning's light,
Its cheering brightness to behold!

III.

I thank thee, Poesy ! for this thy dream—
For while its fancied image with me dwelt,
It shed o'er life's dull page a fitful gleam,
Whereby I pictured there the thoughts I felt,
880 And loved—nor shall “its fairy frost-work melt”,
As dreams are wont, nor moral pass away
From all who read—*how judgment is not dealt,*
Alway on earth, while man inhabits clay,
But recompence for all, awaits an after day !

F I N I S .

N O T E S

TO

T H E V I C T I M .

NOTES.

PART I.

19 line,

Deep in Fluelen's shady bower,

FLUELEN, a small port on the lake of LUCERNE, in the canton of URI.

43 line,

In Grutli's wave-worn, deathless town,

GRUTLI, a small village in an angle of the lake of LUCERNE, and opposite the port of BRUNNEN. The locality is rendered "deathless", from having been the nightly rendezvous of the Swiss Confederates. They met at the foot of the rock of SEELISBERG, in a lonely strip of ground, surrounded by thickets, called the Meadow of GRUTLI.

63 line,

'Twas, "One for all, and all for one",

The Confederates, after their victory over Duke LEOPOLD of AUSTRIA, in 1315, at MORGARTEN, renewed their ancient bond of union, as expressed in the above comprehensive motto.

121 line,

Where Lämmergheyer his aerie placed,

The lämmergheyer is the great vulture of the Alps. He wages a continual warfare with the chamois, and has been known even to attack oxen in some parts of the canton of URI. After wearying his prey by a long chase, he at length drives him to some isolated rock, where the chamois has no alternative, but that of facing his adversary; but in putting himself in a posture of defence, his equilibrium becomes very critical—and the lämmergheyer, after making several feigned swoops, succeeds at length, by one powerful stroke of his wing, in hurling his victim over the precipice. Dropping down after him, with all the air of a conqueror, he dispatches the unhappy creature with a stroke of his beak, and enjoys the feast at leisure. (See Dr. BEATTIE'S "Switzerland.")

160 line,

From noon till sunset joyous melt,

The generality of Swiss waterfalls begin to flow on the first melting of the snow early in the month of May, and cease towards the end of September; but some run only during the daytime, and one, the GRIESEN-BACH, that rises at the foot of MOUNT BLAKE, runs only from mid-day to the setting sun. (See Cox's "Switzerland.")

194 and 5 line,

*Entwined with that sweet flower that blows,
In deepest purple by the snows.*

The gentiana-major grows in profusion within a few paces of the glaciers.

196 line,

Full many a gem and crystal too,

Fine specimens of agate and crystal are found among the Alps, and those from St. GOTHARD are generally superior.

362 line,

Baron Henry was wedded in Toggenberg's hall,

The facts related in this song are historically authentic, and may be met with in that admirable work, Dr. BEATTIE'S "Switzerland." The only liberty taken with the narrative, is the metamorphosis of a raven into a dove.

The ancient fortress of the Counts of TOGGENBERG, crowned a rock not far from the present convent of FISCHINGEN. (Canton St. GALL.) It was in one of the cells of this convent, that the beautiful IDA ended her life.

PART II.

NOTES.

PART II.

569 line,

At Einsiedeln the holy fête,

The abbey of EINSIEDELN is romantically situated in the valley of SIL, (Canton SCHWYZ.)

A great annual fête is held there on the 14th of September. An immense number of pilgrims flock to this anniversary from all the cantons of SWITZERLAND, the RHENISH provinces, and various parts of GERMANY. They appear in their native costume ; many of them bringing offerings from those who are prevented from joining the pilgrimage.

639 line,

Till rolling down the darkened sea,

The lakes in SWITZERLAND are called "seas."

666 line,

The Achsenberg, and Seclisberg,

BETWEEN SISSIGEN and FLUELEN are two mountains, the greater and lesser ACHSENBERG, whose rocky sides rise perpendicularly out of the lake of Lucerne to a prodigious height. They afford no landing place, except one small tabular rock level with the water, on which is erected a chapel, in commemoration of TELL's leap from the boat in which GESSLER was conveying him, with the intent of placing him in perpetual imprisonment.

806 line,

When loudly shook the convent's gate,

The Capuchin convent at Altorf.

THE market place of this town is celebrated as being the spot where TELL, at the inhuman command of GESSLER, shot the apple from his son's head. The village of BÜRGLEN, the birth-place of TELL, is not far distant. ALTORF is about half a league from FLUELEN.

E R R A T U M .

200 line, *for* "loved," *read* "joyed."





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